



UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York

Selecting and Training Contact Tracers to Address Minority Health Disparities: Lessons from COVID-19

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Minority Health Disparities in COVID-19

- ▶ Individuals from minority groups are at increased risk of COVID-19
 - Over-represented in frontline worker positions
 - Concentration in more crowded, urban areas
 - Underlying comorbidities
- ▶ Manifestation of larger health disparity issues
 - Healthcare access and quality
 - Systemic racism has compromised trust of minority communities
 - Health literacy

Deterrents of COVID-19 Need to be Equitable

- ▶ Public health measures, including:
 - safety guidelines
 - contact tracing
 - vaccination
- ▶ Broader healthcare access and quality
- ▶ Interactions with healthcare professionals, government officials, and systems
- ▶ *The public health/healthcare workforce is really important! Including contact tracers*

Pandemic Workforce?

- ▶ Need for a “Contact Tracer Army” of at least 100,000 people (Watson et al., 2020)

npr Coronavirus Cases Are Surging. The Contact Tracing Workforce Is Not • 3:42

CORONAVIRUS BY THE NUMBERS

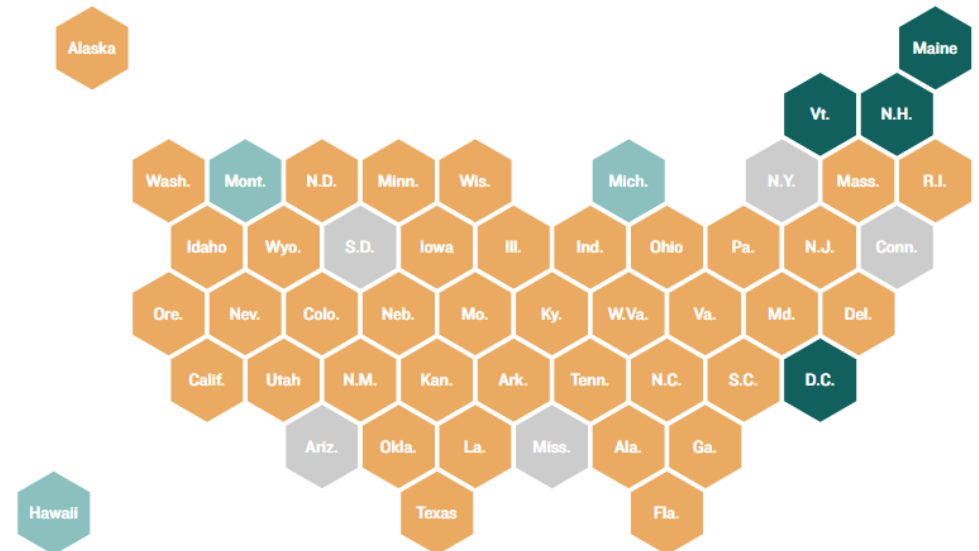
Coronavirus Cases Are Surging. The Contact Tracing Workforce Is Not

August 7, 2020 · 5:02 AM ET
Heard on Morning Edition

 SELENA SIMMONS-DUFFIN

Does Your State Have Enough Contact Tracers To Control Its Outbreak?

■ Currently meets estimated need
 ■ Has reserve staff to meet estimated need
 ■ Does not meet estimated need
 ■ No data available



Notes

Estimated need: Estimated need is based on 14 days of coronavirus cases in each state, analyzed using the Mullan Institute at the George Washington University's Contact Tracing Workforce Estimator.

Research Need & Purpose

- ▶ **Research Gap:** Lack of consideration for the science of personnel psychology in developing a well-skilled, and well-trained workforce to work effectively in minority communities
- ▶ **Research Goal:** to provide recommendations for efficiently, fairly, and validly **selecting** and **training** contact tracers to address future public health crises and to effectively work within minority communities

Personnel Psychology Fundamentals

- ▶ Scientific analysis of a job role (i.e., Job Analysis) helps to identify:
 - Essential job functions and tasks
 - Critical Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, & Other characteristics (KSAOs) for successful:
 - job performance
 - work with minority communities

- ▶ Distinguish KSAO's needed pre-hire and post-hire
 - Guides **selection** (pre-hire) and **training** (post-hire)

Our Research

1. Large-scale survey from the perspective of community members



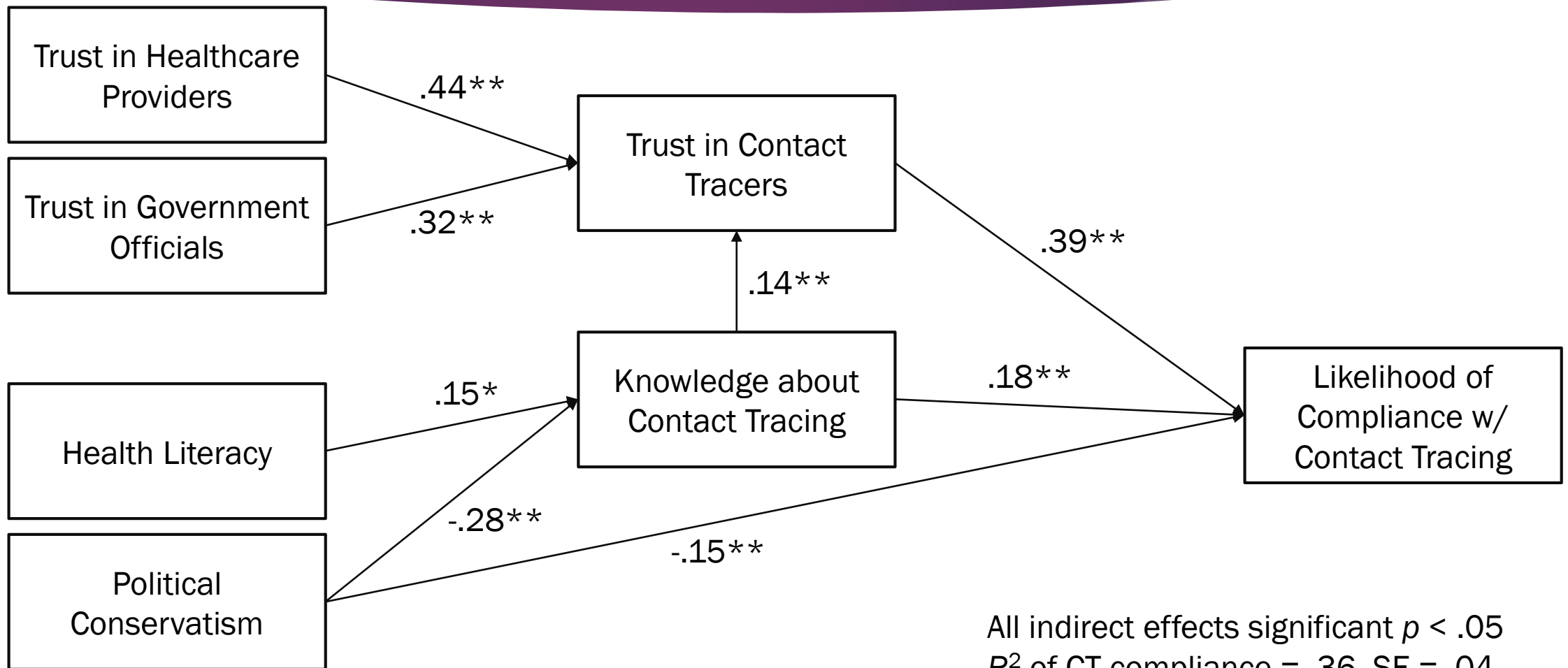
2. Job Analysis of Contact Tracer to identify KSAOs critical for working with minority populations



Our Findings: Study 1 - Survey

- ▶ Participant recruitment on Prolific to administer survey
 - $N = 531$
 - 27.58% AAPI
 - 24.02% White
 - 20.45% Black
 - 19.70% Hispanic/Latinx
 - 8.26% Other/Mixed
 - 48.21% female, 51.04% female
 - Age $M = 30.74$ (SD = 10.69)
 - 58.76% Employed
 - 68.63% Tested for COVID

Our Findings: Study 1 - Survey



All indirect effects significant $p < .05$
 R^2 of CT compliance = $.36$, $SE = .04$

Our Findings: Study 1 - Survey

- ▶ Qualitative data: *What would make it more likely that you would follow a contact tracer's guidance? What would help you trust and listen to them?*
 - Clear explanations of tracers' motives, authority, and data confidentiality/privacy
 - Basics about COVID-19 and the effectiveness of deterrents like contact tracing
 - Communication that is kind, respectful, and compassionate (not threatening or punitive)

- ▶ Two key determinants to willingness to comply with contact tracing requests
 - Trust in contact tracers
 - Knowledge about CT and COVID-19

- ▶ Contact tracer KSAO's may help increase compliance, including in minority populations

Our Findings: Study 2 – Job Analysis

- ▶ Structured interviews; responses transcribed and coded
 - N = 15
 - 53.30% Male
 - 46.67% White
 - Age M = 36.93 (SD = 16.04)
 - 10 current CT, 3 previous CT, 2 CT supervisors

Our Findings: Study 2 – Job Analysis

- ▶ KSAOs contact tracers said they needed to effectively work with minority community members:
 - Knowledge of HIPAA, state, and local health regulations
 - Knowledge of community health impact
 - Active listening skills
 - Complex problem solving skill
 - Cultural sensitivity skill
 - Empathy/compassion

Conclusions & Implications

- ▶ Clear overlap between what community members want from public health workers and what those workers say they need to work with minority groups
- ▶ **CT Selection** should emphasize:
 - Abilities: complex problem solving, oral communication
 - Knowledge: communicable disease spread, community health, HIPAA
 - Other/Personality: empathy/compassion
- ▶ **CT Training** should emphasize:
 - Knowledge: disease specifics, health regulations, available resources
 - Skill: Active listening, cultural sensitivity
- ▶ ***These should be put in place now to help prepare for future pandemic response***

Thank you!

▶ Research Sponsors

